

**For Immediate Release
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DCS Commemorates National Adoption Month

Commissioner Miller Vows to "Build Families, One Child At A Time"

Nashville, TN - November is National Adoption Awareness Month, a time when state governments, communities, businesses, organizations, families and individuals celebrate adoption as a viable, positive and proactive way to build families. The Tennessee Department of Children's Services is commemorating the month by "Building Families, One Child at a Time." The initiative focuses largely on the need for finding adoptive homes for children who are in full DCS guardianship in the foster care system, but also intends to inform the greater public about the viability of adoption as a family-building option.

"Every child deserves a safe, stable and happy home," said Miller. "In 'Building Families, One Child at a Time,' our agency is carrying on with its mission to lift children up and facilitate in establishing positive, permanent outcomes for them."

All DCS regional offices across the state (Davidson, East, Hamilton, Knox, Mid-Cumberland, Northeast, Northwest, Shelby, South Central, Southeast, Southwest and Upper Cumberland) are participating in the initiative. "Building Families, One Child at a Time" unofficially kicked off in mid-October and began in earnest on November 1, with each region aiming to complete as many adoptions as possible by December 31.

"These are children in adoptive homes and up for adoption," Miller said. "They are in the final steps and stages of completing the adoption process, so many children will have a permanent place to call home this holiday season."

Adoptive homes include an adoptive parent(s) who has completed 30 hours of PATH (Parents as Tender Healers) training, which is an educational and self-assessment process that addresses loss and grief, communication styles and family strengths. In the training, prospective adoptive parents also learn more about the children who await adoption, and thereby discover which type of child they can successfully parent. Additionally, prospective foster parents complete the same process and training, which leads some to transition into adoptive parents.

As part of National Adoption Awareness Month, DCS regional offices will also hold a series of events throughout the month. The agency is also prominently spotlighting children currently available for adoption on its Web site (www.state.tn.us/youth). The featured children will be updated on a weekly basis and will remain a fixture on the site in the future.

"There are no means too extraordinary and no legitimate avenues that should not be pursued in order to help all children have the benefit of a forever family and nurturing home environment. The positive impact of each cannot be quantified," Miller said.

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services was established to provide the best possible care for children and youth who are in state custody, or at significant risk of entering custody, and their families. Services provided by DCS include child protective services, foster care, adoption, programs for delinquent youth, probation/aftercare, and treatment and rehabilitation programs for identified youth.

For more information on DCS regional events during National Adoption Awareness Month, contact K. Danielle Edwards at (615) 741-9192 or e-mail K.Danielle.Edwards@state.tn.us.

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